

## COACH'S CONCUSSION RESOURCES FACT SHEET

On May 14, 2009 the Governor of Washington Christine Gregoire signed the **Zackery Lystedt Law**. Zackery Lystedt sustained a significant head injury during a Washington State high school football game. **Effective July 26, 2009**, the Lystedt Law regulates how coaches, must respond when a youth athlete is suspected of sustaining a concussion or any head injury. The law requires:

1. A concussion and head injury information form must be signed by parents and youth athletes acknowledging the risk of head injury prior to the youth athlete initiating practice or competition;
2. A youth athlete who is suspected of sustaining a concussion or head injury must be removed from play – “when in doubt, sit them out”; and
3. A youth athlete who has been removed from play must be evaluated and then receive written clearance from a licensed health care provider prior to returning to play. **(RCW 28A.600.190(4))**

**THE FACTS:** A concussion is a **brain injury**. All concussions are **serious**. Concussions can occur **without** loss of consciousness. Concussions can occur **in any sport**. Recognition and proper management of concussions when they **first occur** can help prevent further injury or even death.

### WHAT IS A CONCUSSION?

A concussion is an injury that changes how the cells in the brain normally work. A concussion is caused by a blow to the head or body that causes the brain to move rapidly inside the skull. Even a “ding,” “getting your bell rung,” or what seems to be a mild bump or blow to the head can be serious. Concussions can also result from a fall or from players colliding with each other or with obstacles, such as a goalpost, even if they do not directly hit their head.

The potential for concussions is greatest in athletic environments where collisions are common. Concussions can occur, however, in **any** organized or unorganized sport or recreational activity. Almost 4 million sports and recreation-related concussions occur in the United States each year. The risks of catastrophic injuries or death are significant when a concussion or head injury is not properly evaluated and managed.

### RECOGNIZING A POSSIBLE CONCUSSION

To help recognize a concussion, you should watch for the following two things among your athletes:

1. A forceful blow to the head or body that results in rapid movement of the head. **And**
2. Any change in the athlete’s behavior, thinking, or physical functioning. (See the signs and symptoms of concussion.)

SIGNS OBSERVED BY COACHING STAFF	SYMPTOMS REPORTED BY ATHLETE
• Appears dazed or stunned	• Headache or “pressure” in head
• Is confused about assignment or position	• Nausea or vomiting
• Forgets sports plays	• Balance problems or dizziness
• Is unsure of game, score, or opponent	• Double or blurry vision
• Moves clumsily	• Sensitivity to light
• Answers questions slowly	• Sensitivity to noise
• Loses consciousness (even briefly)	• Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy
• Shows behavior or personality changes	• Concentration or memory problems
• Can’t recall events prior to hit or fall	• Confusion
• Can’t recall events after hit or fall	• Does not “feel right”

Athletes who experience any of these signs or symptoms after a bump or blow to the head should be kept from play until given permission to return to play by a **health care professional** (see Licensed Health Care Provided list below) with experience in evaluating for concussions. Signs and symptoms of concussion can last from several minutes to days, weeks, months, or even longer in some cases. Remember, you can’t see a concussion and some athletes may not experience and/or report symptoms until hours or days after the injury. If you have any suspicion that your athlete has a concussion, you should keep the athlete out of the game or practice.

### PREVENTION AND PREPARATION

As a coach, you can play a key role in preventing concussions and responding to them properly when they occur. Here are some steps you can take to ensure the best outcome for your athletes and the team:

- **Educate athletes and parents about concussion.** Talk with athletes and their parents about the dangers and potential long-term consequences of concussion. For more information on long-term effects of concussion, view the following online video clip: [http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/tbi/Coaches\\_Tool\\_Kit.htm#Video](http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/tbi/Coaches_Tool_Kit.htm#Video). Explain your concerns about concussion and your

expectations of safe play to athletes, parents, and assistant coaches. Pass out the concussion fact sheets for athletes and for parents at the beginning of the season and again if a concussion occurs.

- **Insist that safety comes first.**

Teach athletes safe playing techniques and encourage them to follow the rules of play.

Encourage athletes to practice good sportsmanship at all times.

Make sure athletes wear the right protective equipment for their activity (such as a mouth guard, also known as a mouth protector, mouth piece or gum shield). Protective equipment should fit properly, be well maintained, and be worn consistently and correctly.

Review the athlete fact sheet with your team to help them recognize the signs and symptoms of a concussion.

- **Teach athletes and parents that it's not smart to play with a concussion.** Sometimes players and parents wrongly believe that it shows strength and courage to play injured, especially with any head or neck injury. Discourage others from pressuring injured athletes to play. Don't let athletes persuade you that they're "just fine" after they have sustained any bump or blow to the head. Ask if players have ever had a concussion.
- **Prevent long-term problems.** A repeat concussion that occurs before the brain recovers from the first—usually within a short period of time (hours, days, or weeks)—can slow recovery or increase the likelihood of having long-term problems. In rare cases, repeat concussions can result in brain swelling, permanent brain damage, and even death. This more serious condition is called second impact syndrome. Keep athletes with known or suspected concussion from play until they have been evaluated and given permission to return to play by a health care professional with experience in evaluating for concussion. Remind your athletes: "It's better to miss one game than the whole season."

### **ACTION PLAN: WHAT SHOULD A COACH DO WHEN A CONCUSSION IS SUSPECTED?**

1. Remove the athlete from play. Look for the signs and symptoms of a concussion if your athlete has experienced a bump or blow to the head. Athletes who experience signs or symptoms of concussion should not be allowed to return to play. When in doubt, keep the athlete out of play.
2. Ensure that the athlete is evaluated right away by an appropriate health care professional. Do not try to judge the severity of the injury yourself. Health care professionals have a number of methods that they can use to assess the severity of concussions. As a coach, recording the following information can help health care professionals in assessing the athlete after the injury:
  - Cause of the injury and force of the hit or blow to the head
  - Any loss of consciousness (passed out/knocked out) and if so, for how long
  - Any memory loss immediately following the injury
  - Any seizures immediately following the injury
  - Number of previous concussions (if any)
3. Inform the athlete's parents or guardians about the possible concussion and give them the fact sheet on concussion. Make sure they know that the athlete should be seen by a health care professional experienced in evaluating for concussion.
4. Allow the athlete to return to play only with written permission from a licensed health care professional with experience in evaluating concussions. A repeat concussion that occurs before the brain recovers from the first can slow recovery or increase the likelihood of having long-term problems. Prevent common long-term problems and the rare second impact syndrome by delaying the youth athlete's return to the activity until he or she receives appropriate medical evaluation and written approval for return to play.
5. Inform your league or sports organization and [Member name] of all concussion injuries.

### **Licensed Health Care Providers**

**The following is a list of licensed health care providers that are trained in the evaluation and treatment of concussions/brain injuries and authorized to allow the athlete to return to play. This list is not exhaustive.**

Medical Doctors (MD), Doctor of Osteopathy (DO), Advanced Registered Nurse Practitioner (ARNP), Physicians Assistant (PA)  
Licensed Certified Athletic Trainers (ATC)

**If you think your athlete has sustained a concussion...take him/her out of play, and seek the advice of a health care professional experienced in evaluating for concussion.**

I have received training on recognizing signs and symptoms of concussion/brain injury, including watching the educational video produced by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and am in compliance with the Zachery Lystedt Law.

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**Coach Printed Name**

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**Coach Signature**

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**Date**

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**Sport/Program**